

AN
EXTRACT
OF THE
LIFE
OF

Monfieur DE RENTY,

A late Nobleman of FRANCE.

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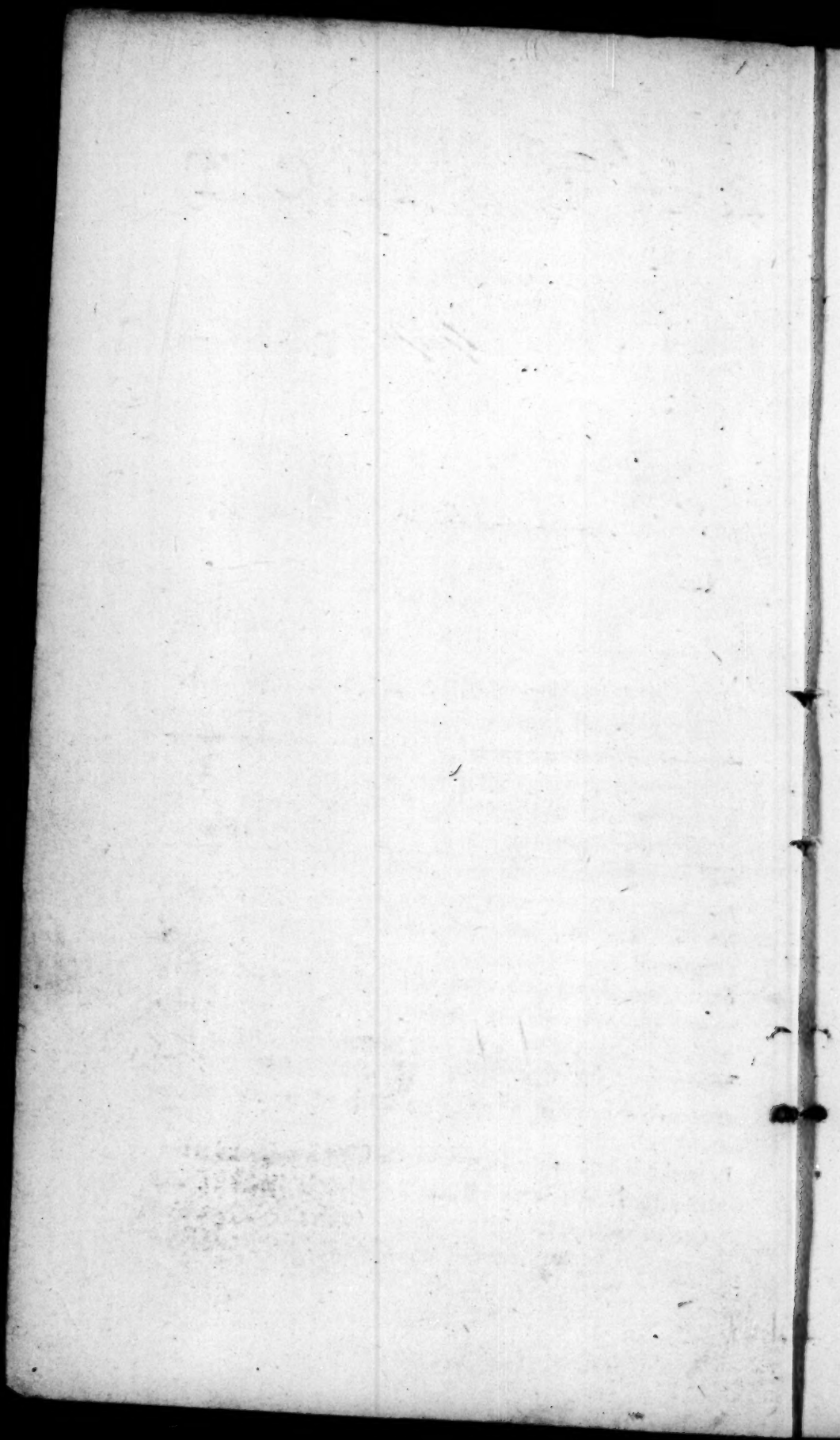
THE FIFTH EDITION.

*In Jefus Chrift neither circumcifion availeth any
thing, nor uncircumcifion; but faith which worketh
by love.* Gal. v. 6.

*Seef thou, how faith wrought together with his works,
and by works was faith made perfect? James ii. 22.*

L O N D O N :

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AN
EXTRACT OF THE LIFE
OF
Monsieur DE RENTY.

CHAPTER I.

Of his Birth, Marriage, and general Way of Life.

1. **M**R. *de Renty* descended from one of the most noble houses of *Artois*. He was the only son of *Charles de Renty*, and was born in the year 1611, at *Beny* in *Low Normandy*. There he was brought up till six or seven years of age, and then by his mother carried to *Paris*, where he lived with her about two years, till he was put into the college of *Navarre*; whence he was sent to *Caen*; till at Seventeen he was removed to an academy, or school of genteel exercises at *Paris*. He was soon accomplished in all the exercises there taught: But what then pleased him most was the *Mathematicks*. For these he slighted all sorts of diversions, till he understood them perfectly, and composed some books therein.

2. About this time a Stationer whom he used, presented him with *Kempis of the Imitation of Christ*; and some time after pressed him to read it, which he had no sooner done, than he felt

new thoughts and affections, and resolved seriously to pursue the one thing needful, the working out his salvation. And ever after he so esteemed that book, that he always carried it about him, and made use of it on all occasions.

3. At the age of Twenty-two, he married *Elizabeth de Balsac*, daughter of the Count of *Graville*, by whom he had five children, four of which (two sons and two daughters) survived him.

4. Having lived to the age of twenty-seven years, it pleased God to touch his heart more closely; and this time he marked as the beginning of his entire change, and perfect consecration to God's service: In order whereto, he was well convinced of the necessity of a good guide; and God provided him one such as his need required, a person of deep learning, of great piety, and well experienced in the direction of souls, who had the conduct of him for twelve years. By his advice he withdrew altogether from court, he renounced all visits of pure compliment, and all unnecessary employments, to give himself up to those which might glorify God, and help his neighbour.

5. Every day before dinner, and again in the evening, he made an exact search into his smallest faults. He communicated three or four times a week, having ever an incredible esteem of the holy Eucharist, blessing and praising God for its institution, and exciting all men to do the same. He was used to say, "That the great design of God in the Incarnation, Life, Death, and Resurrection of his Son, was to convey unto us his Spirit, to be unto us Life Eternal; and in order to cause us to die to ourselves, and live thereby, he gave him to us in this holy sacrament, and with him
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all the blessings of grace to dispose us for those of glory."

6. One day in a week he visited the poor sick people of the great hospital *de Dieu*: Another, those of his own parish: a third, the prisoners; and in the rest he used to meet at assemblies of piety. He assembled his own family every evening to prayers, and discoursed to them every *Saturday* on the gospel for the next day. And of his children he took more especial care, to engrave deeply in them the fear of God, and to convince them that the customs and maxims of the world were utterly irreconcilable to the Gospel of Christ.

7. The order he kept in his journies was this: In the morning before setting out, they joined in prayer; after setting out, the first thing done was, the saying the *Itinerarium*; next was, the singing the *Litanies of our Lord*; then followed some meditation, and after that a part of the *Divine Office*. This being done he entertained the company with some good discourse. Beholding the spacious extent of the country, he would speak of the immensity of God. Upon the presenting of any beautiful object, he would discourse of the beauty of God, and in so lively a manner as to touch the very heart. Approaching near the place where they were to dine, he began his self-examination: And being come thither, as soon as out of his coach, he went to the church, and next, if there were any in the place, to the hospital. Being at his Inn, the first thing he did in his chamber was, to cast himself on his knees, and to pray with great affection for all persons that entered that place, and for pardon of all disorders that had been there committed. If he saw any thing offensive written on the walls or

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chimnies,

chimnies, he defaced it, and in the place wrote something of instruction. And always before his departure he endeavoured to give some good advice to the servants of the house, or to such poor as he could meet with, that so he might not pass through any place without doing some good there. After dinner, when in his coach again, he took a little time for recollection, then sung the *Vespers*; which done, he wished the company to use some useful conversation. About four they sung the Evening Psalms, afterwards he applied himself to mental prayer; and being come to his Inn, his exercises were the same with those of the morning.

8. A fuller account of his general way of life he writ to his second director, as follows:

“ I have delayed some days after the command I had, to set down the employing of my time, for the better discovering of some things therein; but I find nothing there of strict order, because all consists in following the order of God, which causes in a manner continually different things, though all upon the same foundation.

“ For my outward behaviour, I usually rise at five, (that is, after part of the night spent in prayer). At my awakening, I consider myself as nothing, before the majesty of God. I unite me to his Son and Spirit. Being risen, I cast myself down, and adore the blessing of the Incarnation, which gives us access to God; and deliver up myself to the Holy Jesus, to be entered into his Spirit.

“ Being cloathed, I go into the chapel, where I cast myself down, and adore God, abasing me before him, and making me the most little, most naked, most empty of myself that I can; and I hold me there by faith, having recourse to his
Son

Son and to his Holy Spirit, that whatsoever is his pleasure may be done by me.

"Between Six and Seven I read two chapters of the New Testament bare headed and on my knees. I then give place to my affairs; but if there be no business urgent, I prostrate myself before God till I go to church. There I stay till half an hour past Eleven, except when we dine some poor people, then I return at Eleven. Before dinner I examine myself, and use some prayers for the Church, and for the propagation of the Faith. I dine at Twelve, and in the while have something read. Half an hour past Twelve I spend an hour with them that have business with me. Then I go out whither the order of God shall direct. Some days are assigned for certain exercises: others are not, but be it as it will, I endeavour to spend about evening an hour in devotion. About Even, after I have used some prayers, we go to supper. After supper I instruct my children. At Nine are Family Prayers, after which I meditate till Ten; and then going to my chamber, and recommending myself to my God, after some short prayers, I endeavour to repose.

"As to the order of my interior, I have not (as I may say) any; for since I left my *Breviary* all my forms have left me, and now instead of serving me as means to go to God, they would only be hindrances. I bear in me ordinarily an experimental verity, and a plenitude of the most Holy Trinity, which elevates me to a simple view of God, and with that I do all that his providence enjoins me, not regarding any thing for their greatness or littleness, but only the order of God, and the glory they may render him.

" For

" For the things done in community, I often cannot rest there : I perform indeed the exterior, for the keeping of order ; but follow always my interior, because when a man hath God, there is no need to search for him elsewhere. And when he holds us in one manner, it is not for us to take hold of him in another, and the soul knows well what unites it, and what multiplies and directs it.

" For the interior thereof, I follow his attractive : and for the exterior I see the divine will, which I follow with the discernment of his Spirit, in all simplicity ; and so I possess by his grace, in all things, silence of spirit, a profound reverence, and solid peace. I communicate almost every day, perceiving myself strongly drawn thereto. I continually give myself up to God through Jesus Christ, worshipping him in spirit and in truth, loving him with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind, and with all my strength, and seeing in all things the conduct of God, and adorning and following it. And this only abiding in my soul, all things else are defaced and blotted out. I have nothing of sensible in me, unless now and then some transitory touches : but if any dare to say it, when I sound my will, I find it so quick and flaming, that it would devour me, if the same Lord who animates it (though unworthily) did not restrain it. I enter into a heat and into fire, and even to my fingers ends, feel that all within me speaks for its God, and stretcheth itself for in length and breadth in his immensity, that it may there dissolve and there lose itself to glorify him."

C H A P. II.

His Humility.

1. **S**T. *Austin* well observes, that poverty of spirit is nothing else but humility: the truly humble knowing themselves to be nothing of themselves but sin and misery, to have nothing, as being at best but manifold receivers of the grace of God; to be able to do nothing, having no power of themselves even to think a good thought, and to deserve nothing but shame and contempt, but misery and punishment. And they are willing, yea desirous, that all others should think of them as they do of themselves.

2. *M. de Renty* being well convinced that this is the foundation of all virtue, and that it was the proper virtue of Jesus Christ, whom he had proposed to himself as his pattern in all things, embraced it with his affection, gave himself up to it with all his force, and practised it in its utmost latitude.

3. He had so low an opinion of himself, as it would be a difficult thing to express. The greatness of God, whenever he considered it, humbled him to an immeasurable depth; "A mote, said he, in the sun is very little, but I am far less in the presence of God, I am nothing." But correcting himself, he added, "Alas, I am too much; I am a sinner, an anathema, through my crimes." To the same person he wrote, "Methinks I break myself in pieces before God: That I am spoken of, that I have so much as a name, is a strange thing." I have seen him very often (says one that knew him well) humble himself, as it were to the centre of the earth, while he spoke to me
of

of God ; saying, " It was not for such a one as him to speak of him, but that he ought rather to contain himself in silence."

4. This exceeding low opinion he had of himself, made him more than once say, with tears in his eyes, " That he was much astonished at the goodness of men in suffering of him, and that he could not enough wonder, why every where they threw not dirt at him, and that all the creatures did not bandy against him." And he was persuaded, it was much boldness in him to speak, and that men shewed great patience in enduring his conversation.

5. Nor was there any thing which did not serve to increase his humility. He abased himself much in the consideration of the weakness of our nature, of which, as he expresseth it, " It is important that a man have experience, that he may neither forget himself, nor the place he ought to hold : that no flesh may glory in his sight ; that being abased and rendered as a thing that is not at all, Jesus Christ may be in him, the life of grace and holiness, waiting for the time of our redemption."

6. But much was he humbled by the consideration of his past sins : in one of his letters to his Director, he writes thus ; " My faults are as one great heap, which I feel in myself, obstructing the light from God. I am strangely remiss and ungrateful, I find much in myself, to confound and humble me." In another, " I am sensible of my fault, in mentioning, that I had placed a servant in such a family. I had a motion within me, not to have spoken it ; and yet it escaped from me : of which I am exceedingly sensible. I should have been more faithful to the Spirit of God." And in another, " I am

as blind (or rather more) in seeing my faults as in other things. Only in general, I have a deep sense of my misery : and I can say, I am not ignorant of my unworthiness, and the deplorable corruption sin hath wrought in me. But lately, I mentioned the faults of a certain person to another that knew of them before, to make him understand that he was in a better condition. But my conscience reproached me, that I might have done this without : and I confess I meddled too much in that affair. In sum, I am a straggler from God, and a ground over-run with thorns."

7. He drew yet further matter of humiliation from his rank and condition, and the secular advantages which it gave him. He not only despised, but was ashamed of them ; often groaning before the majesty of God, and saying, " He was in the lowest condition, according to the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and that he had great confusion to see himself in that estate." Hence it was, that he solemnly renounced his nobility, and gave it into the hands of our Lord ; that he did not love even for any one to call him *Monsieur*, and that he wholly declined the title of *Marquis*, (which was proper to his house) and suffered only that of *Baron of Renty*.

8. Even the gifts and graces of God made him more humble ; thus producing their true effect which is, To abase and elevate the soul both together, to raise it to God, and abase it to itself. In whatever good was done by him he assumed no share at all, but referred all to God the true source. And so in the management of all those talents, he had always his hands clean without touching what appertained to God. Nor would he therefore that any should consider him
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in what he said or did, but regard God alone therein. And to one who much desired a visit from him, he wrote thus, "I cannot bear the account you make of my visits and society. Let us look much upon God: let us bind ourselves strictly to Jesus Christ, that we may learn of him fully to renounce ourselves. O, my God, when will it be that we shall eye ourselves no more, when we shall speak no more of ourselves, and when all vanity shall be destroyed!"

9. He likewise esteemed himself most unworthy of any of the grace or favours of God. Of which he says to a friend, "The gifts of God are sometimes so great, that they put us beyond ourselves. As among men, if a poor man receive a gift from a prince, according to the grandeur of his own power, he is utterly overwhelmed, and can find no words to express his acknowledgment: so God gives blessings that go beyond our expectations or capacities, and which make us see how unworthy we are, without daring to lift up our eyes; so doth their brightness dazzle, and their greatness astonish us."

10. The same opinion which he had of himself, he was willing, yea desirous that others likewise should have of him. "If I were to wish any thing, said he, it should be, to be much humbled, and to be treated as an off-scouring by men." And hence he received contempt, when it came, not with a patience only, but with joy: of which he gave an evident proof in his first journey to *Dijon*, whence he thus wrote to his director:

"The reports here spread concerning me, are That I have nothing but artifice and shews of devotion; and that I kept private, out of fear

fear by coming abroad, of discovering what I was. Most, I find, even of those from whom I expected quite the contrary, have solicited against me. And hereby God hath shewn me many favours. I have been with them, and received humiliation with great joy. I have been very wary of opening myself in any thing that might recommend me to them. I have only done in my business what truth required; and for any thing else, have made it matter of confusion, as I ought. I shall be here, I believe as one excommunicate, as the scape-goat of the old law, driven out into the wilderness for my enormous sins. I desire only to love God, and condemn myself."

11. Nor was it only in his words, but in his actions also, that the humility of his heart appeared. Since his entire dedication of himself to God, he would not suffer a cushion to be carried to church for him; but to be there hid and disregarded, he often mingled himself among mechanicks and mean persons. He kept himself always as much as he could at the lower end of the church; and frequently, if the door was shut, said his prayers on the outside of it, that he "might not, as he said, put any to the trouble of opening it to a poor sinner."

12. During the war at *Paris*, he went himself to buy bread for the poor, and carried through the streets as much as his strength would permit. At the same time offering to take into his care the church plate of a Monastery, he pressed them to let him carry to his lodging (which was two miles thence) and on foot as he was, a very large and weighty piece. And being then desired that when he did them the favour to visit them again, he would come

in his coach, by reason of the distance; he answered, "he did not love to make use of a coach, he must endeavour to make himself in every thing very little." He went therefore thither on foot, and returned at five or six, in the shortest days, sometimes in thawing weather. And being told of the pains he took, he replied, "Our Lord took pains in a far other manner."

13. When he was assisting with his own hand in the repairing of one of his houses, he thus expressed himself:

"Blessed for ever be our great God, by Jesus Christ! I believe I ought to labour in the lowest employments; and the time I spend therein, I count very dear, regarding it as ordered by God. What makes me the more to know it is his order, is this; That from time to time I feel more of retribution from him in one instant, than the patience and humiliation of a sinner could merit in all his life. He so opens himself to me, that I am quite mollified, and melted into tears. My eyes are so full of them, that often I have much ado to keep them in, pierced as I am with love, with reverence, and with acknowledgment of his goodness manifested by his enlightening presence, and of his inexplicable conduct. I see we are not, by a spirit of pride under pretence of the glory of God, to dispense with ourselves from labouring in things mean and painful. It was a work very gross and mean, for Jesus Christ to converse with men, who had more of rudeness than these stones I deal with. O that I may obtain a part in his obedience and submissio to the orders of God his Father."

14. Being

Being one day to go to a person of great quality, in a business that much concerned the glory of God, he would not use his coach, though he was to traverse in a manner all *Paris*, and it poured down with rain. One moved, that at least his footman might carry a cloak, which he might take when he came thither. But he yielded not. Only he consented to throw that cloak over him: and in the Nobleman's house, he laid aside the wet cloak, and appeared in the other ordinary one of his own.

15. Behold another effect of his humility, of which he writ to his Director, Dec. 20, 1646.

"The other day my Lord Chancellor's Lady sent me a packet of letters, in which were some from the king, wherein I was made counsellor of state. I sent her word, that I received what had the mark of the king with all respect. But I most humbly begged she would be pleased to take in good part, if I did not accept those letters but desired that the business might sleep without noise. My disposition towards affairs of this nature is, to have nothing at all to do with them. If they come upon me perforce, without my seeking, our Lord will give me strength to bear them."

16. To the same person on another occasion, he wrote as follows:

"Walking one day through the streets of *Paris*, in a mean dress, I deeply reflected on that of the Apostle, *We are become as the filth and off-scouring of the world*. I considered how much neatness and new things, even in the most trifling instances, do hurt (if one take not good heed) the simplicity and lowliness of a christian spirit. And I saw it was a great temptation for any, to think to preserve his

outward grandeur, in hopes thereby to have more weight and authority for the service of God. This is a pretence indeed, that the infirmity of most christians makes use of the beginning: but experience draws them at last to Jesus Christ, who was made the lowest of men."

17. A further proof of his humility, was his carriage to his director. He did nothing that concerned himself, without his conduct: to him he proposed whatever he designed, either by speaking or writing, clearly and punctually desiring "his advice, his pleasure, and blessing upon it;" and that with the utmost respect and submission: and without reply or disputing, he simply and exactly followed his order. His director having written to him, he answered in these terms; "I beseech you to believe, that although I am most imperfect and a great sinner, yet if you do me the favour to send me a word of what you know to be necessary for me, I hope with God's help to profit thereby. I pant not after any thing but to find God and Jesus Christ, in simplicity and truth. I pretend to nothing in this world but this; and beside this I desire nothing."

18. The last effect of his humility we shall mention, was his extreme contempt of the world. He despised all which it could give or promise; all its goods, pleasures, honours, dignities; counted all its allurements as dung and dross, trampled under foot all its glories. He beheld for this end our Lord for his pattern, who, from his very first entrance into it, made an open profession of an absolute contempt of it, "*because he was not of the world.*"

19. To

19. To animate a Lady with the same spirit, he wrote to her thus: "I wonder how a thing so little as man, drawn out of nothing in his original, infected with his first parent's sin, and the addition of his own; when he is raised to so high a degree of honour, as to be one with Christ the Son of God; can continue to esteem the world, or make any account of its vanities! Shall the things of the earth waste the little time we have to secure the treasures of heaven? things that all will pass away like a dream: as we see our fathers are gone already, and there is no more remembrance of them: their joys and griefs, their pleasures and pains, are they not all vanished away? And are we not sure they were out of their senses, if they considered any thing but God in their ways? The same will befall us: every thing else will pass away, and God alone will abide."

The same lady, in another letter, he encourages thus: "Courage, all is well! We must die to the world, and search out the hindrances it brings to our perfection. We must live in the world as not living there; possess it, as not possessing it. Let us drive out of our minds the affection to our fine houses; let us ruin the delights of our gardens; let us burn our groves; let us banish these vain images which we have of our children; approving in them what we condemn in ourselves, the show and glitter of the world."

"I know there is a difference of conditions, but all ought to reject those entailments on noble blood, (as men account them) those principles of aspiring to the highest, and of bearing nothing. Let us take from them this vanity of mind, this stateliness of behaviour: Let us arm

them against the pernicious examples of those Grandees in story, whose punishments are as eminent in hell, as their presumption was upon earth.

“ My design is not, that you should demolish your walks, or let your gardens run into a wilderness. The ruins I speak of must be made in our own minds, not executed of things insensible. When I say, we must set all on fire, my thoughts were to follow that admirable spirit of the Apostle, who would that we have poverty amidst our riches, and divestment in the midst of our possessions: He means, that our spirit be thoroughly purified and separated from all creatures; because a christian does himself great wrong, if he entertains in his heart any other inclinations than those of Jesus Christ, who saw all the world without destroying it, but withal without cleaving to it.”

20. It is to bring us to this spirit, that God permits us to meet so many pains and troubles in the world; as when a man sets thorns in a way, to make men take another. “ God has his ends, says Mr. *De Renty*, in all these contrarieties, viz. that those who are his, should be yet more his, and despise more and more all that is in the world. By these the confusion and vanity of the world are made known to them that are not of it; who being in the spirit of death, wait for nothing more there but death; bringing forth, in the mean while, the fruits of life eternal.

C H A P. III.

His Self-Denial and Mortification.

1. **A**S it is absolutely necessary for every soldier of Christ, who would not *so fight as one that beateth the air, to keep the body under, and bring it into subjection*; Mr. De Renty vigorously applied himself to this work. He made but one meal a-day for several years; till he was enjoined to take more nourishment, to be the better able to undergo the great labours he undertook for his neighbour. He nevertheless eat but little, and always of the worst. A person who observed him at dinner one day, took notice of all he eat was some pears only, and that with so great seriousness and recollection, that it was easy to discern his mind was on God, and not upon his meat.

2. When one of his friends entertained him one day at *Caen*, he was much grieved (as he afterwards declared) that christians should be feasters; adding, *It was a torment to him to be where there was so much superfluity*. Hereon his friends took no more thought about his diet, knowing his best entertainment was the meanest fare, that they could not oblige him more than by leaving him to his liberty. And often at *Paris*, when he was so far from home, that he could not return to dinner, he would step into a Baker's shop, and after a piece of bread and a draught of water, chearfully go on with his business.

3. Nor

3. Nor did he deny himself only with regard to his taste, but to all his other senses also. When he went into the country, and came in the evening to his Inn, after having dismissed his servants, he either passed the night in a chair, or lay down in his clothes and boots, which was his custom till death. And when at *Amiens*, a Lady, in honour of his virtue and quality, had prepared him a rich bed in a stately chamber, he made no use of it, but laid him down upon a bench, and there slept till morning.

4. Being come to *Pointois* in Winter, and lodging at the *Carmelite Nuns*, he told them not to make a fire, or prepare a bed. He then went to visit the prisoners (which he never forgot) and at his return, about nine in the evening, finding them going to prayers, without taking any thing to eat, he went into the church with them, where he continued till eleven. And indeed at every time and every place, on every occasion, even in the slightest and meanest things, he kept a watchful eye over himself, that he might in no instance fulfil the desires of the flesh, but daily inure himself to endure hardship.

5. A short description of his mortification, or deadness to the world, we have in his own words. " Since the time I gave up my liberty to God, I was given to understand, to what a state the soul is brought, which is capable of union with him. I saw my soul reduced into a small point, contracted and shrunk up to nothing. At the same time I beheld myself as encompassed with whatsoever the world loves, and as it were a hand removing all this far from me, and plunging it into the ocean. First, I saw removed all outward things, kingdoms, great offices,

offices, stately buildings, rich and elegant furniture, gold and silver, recreations, pleasures: all which hinder the soul in her way to God, of which therefore it is his pleasure she be divested, that she may arrive at that death which will bring her into the possession of real life. Secondly, all inward things, which are of a more delicate and precious nature, as learning, reason, strength of memory, and understanding; to which likewise we are in a manner dead, if we are alive to God. And I perceived that we must come like little infants, simple and innocent, separated not only from evil, but even from our ordinary manner of doing what is good. We are to undertake what things the divine Providence presents to us, by making our way by God to them, rather than by them to God. A truly mortified soul sees nothing but God: not so much (if I may so speak) as the things she **does**, of which nothing stays in her, neither choice, nor joy, nor sorrow, for their greatness, or for their littleness, for good or bad success; but only the good pleasure and order of God, which ruleth in all things, and which in all things contents the soul that adheres to him, and not to the vicissitude of affairs, and is therefore constantly even, and always the same in the midst of all changes."

6. As to the particulars of Mr. *De Renty's* mortification, in the first place, he was dead to riches. "I acknowledge before God (says he in a letter to his director) his great mercy to me through his Son, in freeing me from the things of this world, and my constant thoughts are, that if his order did not oblige me to do otherwise, I would quit all I have." And to another, "All that can be imagined in this world

world is of so small concern, though it were the losing of all our goods. This poor ant-hill is not worth a serious thought. Had we but little faith and a little love, how happy should we esteem ourselves in giving way all, to attend on God only!"

7. Thus entirely, even in the possession of riches, was his heart disengaged from them. And when the better part of his estate was in danger of being lost, he said, without the least emotion, "Since God hath committed this estate to me, I will do what shall behove me to preserve it, and then it is all one to me what follows." Yea, he often expressed a kind of holy envy toward the poor, and a high esteem of their condition, both as most advantageous for christian perfection, and because Christ himself had lived and died therein. "I avow to you, (says he to a friend) the more of riches come to me, the more do I discover the malignity affixed to them. My heart is strongly inclined to follow Him who was the most poor and depressed among all his followers. But that I know I may not put myself into that estate, I should pant after it very much. What I infer from hence is this, That knowing the counsels of God, I cannot tell how he will dispose of me for the future: but I offer myself up to whatsoever shall please Him, knowing that with Him I can do all things."

8. Thus his inward temper appeared in a thousand outward effects. He parted with several books, because richly bound; used no gloves in any season; wore no clothes but plain and close made: carried no silver about him, but for works of charity. I have seen him at
first

first in his coach, with a page and footman; afterward, in his coach with a footman, without a page; then with his footman only, without his coach; and in fine, without either.

9. And as he was dead to riches, and to all the things of the world, so he was, secondly, to the persons in it; having no affection for any, but what was grounded upon, and subordinate to the love of God. This was particularly observable, with regard to those who are engaged to him by one of the tenderest ties, who depended upon him, and used his counsel for the conduct of their souls. To one of these he wrote, "I cannot hear without trouble the great matter you make of my conversation: let us breathe after God, and learn from Jesus Christ an entire renunciation of our own affections." And in another letter thus: "Jesus Christ is ever the same, and his grace is continually advancing; and as long as I am his, I shall be yours for his sake. He is not wont to part souls by the separation of bodies: since his custom is, only to take away what might be a hindrance to the perfect life of the Spirit."

10. To a friend who had lost his Director, he wrote thus: "His remove would doubtless be a great loss to you and all the country, if the Providence of God did not rather sanctify and establish, than destroy; but by removing these visible supports, he often settles us more firmly in our adherence to him through Christ, where we find all power, add who is so near that he is even in the midst of us; and when our dependence upon creatures is cut off by his Providence, we experimentally find, that we are not left destitute, but that supply is made either by
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the Spirit which dwelleth in us, or by his ministers that remain, who the fewer they are, the more is the grace we receive by them multiplied. Nor should we be further engaged to those who assist us in our spiritual conduct, than as to God's instruments, whose help it is his will we should make use of, but no longer than he pleaseth; and when it is his will to take them from us by death, or otherwise, we ought not to lose our courage, but with submission and gratitude resign all to Him, who will again provide for us as seemeth him best."

11. He was, Thirdly, dead to all Desire of every kind. Being one day asked, "How he could be so quiet in such circumstances, he answered, "That through God's mercy, he was indifferent to all things, and that he no longer felt either Fear or Desire of any thing." And writing to his Director, he says, "For the future I could wish, if there be any thing left for me to wish, that I had nothing left me but my God: this is the rich treasure of the heart, the sure replenishment of the soul."

12. He had no desire even of sensible Grace and consolations; touching which, to one who eagerly desired them, he expressed himself thus: "The want of sensible comfort, dryness, and other troubles of spirit, are to be borne with upon any terms, and we must give up ourselves as forlorn creatures, throwing ourselves wholly upon God." And again, "However dry your soul may be, when you endeavour to place it in a state of reverence and affiance in the presence of God, persevere still as much as you can, and keep yourself shut up in the cabinet of your heart; suffer the noise of all those tempests

tempests without ; be still, and mind them not ; they have all their use ; they serve to purge the soul, and dispose it for the operation of God upon it. Let then distractions, and all sorts of imaginations assault you, as it pleaseth God, but let them not hinder you from that holy exercise ; diverting (as you are able) your mind from them, continue your sacrifice, with full assurance you shall not wait long, before your Lord come." And when he found himself for a time, in such a condition, he would cry out aloud, " I am thine, O God, in spite of all these things, and so I will continue without reserve for ever." And sometimes he would write with his finger upon the ground, " I am content with every thing that proceeds from the will of God : I ask nothing else but what he appoints for me ; I will never trouble myself to procure consolations, or to be freed from dryness ; my resolution is to bless God at all times."

13. Lastly, He was dead to his own will, which he had perfectly resigned in conformity to the will of God. " Far be it from me," saith he in one of his letters, " to act in this by my own spirit ; I would wholly have it annihilated, that it might know no other language but Nothing, and continually Nothing ; to follow in all the footsteps of the Divine Will, according to its measure and manner." In another thus : " My Saviour hath graciously brought me to such a state of indifferency for every thing, that I could be well contented, all my life, to be fixed to my bed, a paralytick, not able to stir, without making any reflection on any service I might render to my neighbour, or that I could render him no more : all things,

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according to the will of God, being equal to me." And in a third, "Of late I have been busied in such employments as were sufficient to have overwhelmed so weak a spirit as mine, had it not been absolutely resigned to the will of God. It is on him alone I rest, having renounced myself. I adore the decrees of his sacred will, who holdeth all things in his own hands, to keep us subject unto him by his justice, and to sanctify us by his love. Happy, if we have the hearts of children, the spirit of Christ Jesus, to sigh after him, and cry continually, *Abba Father*."

C H A P. IV.

His Patience.

1. **Q**UESSIONLESS the humble man is patient because he knows he deserves far more than he suffers: and whoever will search into the true cause of his own impatience, will find it to be no other than pride. On the contrary, *M. de Renty* being most humble, was by consequence most patient.

2. Persons who had lived a very long time with him, and carefully studied all his actions, never heard him complain for any thing whatever; neither for sickness, nor loss, nor any other occasion; but they always observed in him a constancy immoveable, continually lifting up his heart to God, and offering all to him, without otherwise dwelling on what was grievous;

ous; being glad that the work of God went on, and receiving all in the spirit of sacrifice.

3. In his second journey to *Dijon*, with his lady and the Countess of *Chatres*, he was seized with a violent rheumatism, which put him into pain all over his body: and when he was obliged to take his bed, he went thither quite stooping, supported by a staff, and by a person that led him. But notwithstanding the extremity of the pain, he made no complaint, nor uttered one word. The ladies seeing him first quite pale and wan, and in a moment all on fire, told him, "Surely, he was very ill; He answered only by a discourse on the pain endured by Jesus Christ, and the favour it was for a soul to suffer for God's will; but in terms so full of sweetness, and so much of love and zeal, that the company were affected with great devotion in hearing him."

4. When he was again asked, whether he was not in much pain, he at length answered plainly, "My pains are great, even to swooning; but tho' I feel them in their extremity, yet, thro' the grace of God, I yield not myself up to them, but to him." He said farther, that being led into his chapel of *Citry*, and set down upon a bench by reason of his illness, the bench broke without any visible cause, and that he believed the evil spirit had broken it, in order to provoke him to impatience, making him fall untowardly: "But by the mercy of God, said he, tho' the pain that surprized me was sharp, I was no more moved than you see me now."

5. Nor was it only in sickness, but in all occurrences of life, that he carefully practised this virtue; so that whatsoever beset him, tho' it shocked his whole nature, his body, spirit, judgment,

ment, will, inclinations, desires, designs, and those of the best sort, he possessed his soul in patience and tranquility, receiving all without any alteration, without being either exalted or dejected by it.

6. " Praying to God, says he, in one of his prayers, before the holy sacrament, a poor man came to me to beg an alms. In this instant it was given me to understand, that if we were well enlightened, *we should never imagine ourselves to be hindered by any person or thing* : because we should in all things regard the order of God, conducting all to our advantage: we should see that both inward and outward distractions are to be received with the same spirit, and that the uneasiness these little accidents give us, spring purely from our want of mortification.

" We ought indeed, as far as we can, to shun the occasions. But when they come, we must look upon them as ordered by God, and receive and bear them with all sweetness, humility, and reverence: and then tho' they interrupt us, the order of God is not interrupted in us. And this indeed is the great secret of the spiritual life; this is paradise upon earth.

" In truth, nothing troubles us but thro' our own fault: all the vexation which we inwardly feel, or outwardly shew, when any one crosses or hinders us from doing any thing, flows from the disorder of our too much engaged spirit. For the removing of which, and keeping our hearts in peace, we must mark this well: *Whoever hinders us from doing one good work, thereby gives us the means of practising another.* A man, suppose, interrupts your reading and prayer. But he gives you an occasion of exercising patience, which at this time will please God, and perfect you,

you, more than all those other employments. In them there was something of your own will; but in this you wholly renounce yourself. And the fulness of God is not, but in the emptiness of the creature."

7. One great source of *M. de Renty's* patience was, the high esteem he had of sufferings, which sometimes made him ready to cry out with that holy woman, "Either to die or to suffer!" "I see, says he, that in a manner, every thing is unprofitable in this life but to suffer. Every pleasure is a too hasty seizure of that recompence, which is not due to criminals, who sojourn in this world only to be purged. Some pleasures indeed may be sometimes necessary, in regard of our weakness; but even they are apt to hinder the soul from attaining so high a degree of perfection."

8. "Though I dare not chuse or bring sufferings on myself, (says he in a letter to his director) yet having always before my eyes how little I render to God for his favours, I am inflamed to suffer with our Lord. In every other thing we are receivers from God. But in this, tho' we receive the grace to suffer, yet the suffering is that which we can in a manner give to God, and is the best gage and proof of our love." But he very wisely adds, "Altho' I know this, yet I cease not to know what I am: and amidst all my inclinations and desires, I take care not to suffer the least thing: or, if I happen to do so, I revoke it afterwards, as having done foolishly. I have too much experience of my weakness. I give myself only to my God for every thing he pleases. By his order I *will* all: with him I can *do* all: and that which is ordered by him is always accompanied by his grace."

9 The same spirit he earnestly recommended to all who were studious of his christian perfection. To one of whom he said, " It is a great favour to suffer; that is, if you suffer in the spirit of Jesus Christ. But there are very few that do so; very few that suffer with a perfect resignation to what God ordains concerning them; very few without some inquietude, and fear dwelling in their thoughts upon their pressures: few that give up all events to the conduct of God, to employ themselves entirely in his praise, and to give way by their acquiescence and submission for him to exercise all his rights and powers over them."

10. One that was in great pain he encouraged thus: " Many are called Christians, but few have a christian spirit. Many look up to heaven in their prayers, but in their lives are the children of nature, looking only upon the earth. If they do lift up their eyes to heaven, it is only to complain; to pray God to condescend to their desires, not to shew their acceptance of his. Or perhaps they will give some small things to God: but not those on which they have fixed their affection. If he separates them from them, it is a dismembering which he must make, and to which they cannot consent. As tho' the life of christians were not a life of sacrifice, a continual imitation of a crucified Saviour.

" GOD, who knows our wretchedness, takes from us for our good, the cause of our evil, a parent, a child, a husband, that he may by another evil, Affliction, draw us to himself, and make us see that all these ties to whatsoever it be that separates us from him are so many obstacles to our real happiness; and such obstacles that we shall one day own in the face of all the creation,

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the greatest mercy he ever did was to free us from them. But we must beware not to count his mercy a chance or misfortune; for this would be to turn the remedy into poison.

“ Let us enter into the holy disposition which was in Christ, to suffer willingly for the glory of God, and our salvation. Is it not strange, that tho’ the way he pass thro’ to glory be ignominy and pain, and the cross, yet they call themselves his followers, desire and expect another way for themselves to walk in? It is a shame for a christian to pass his days more at ease than Jesus Christ did. Let us therefore go after him, and suffer with him. Blessed be sickness, the loss of honour, riches, goods; of the nearest things, and the separation from all creatures which holds us bowed towards the earth, if it set us straight, and makes us lift up our eyes to heaven, and enter into the designs of God over us. Blessed be the plague, the war, the famine, all the scourges of God, which produce in us these effects of grace and salvation!”

11. The greatest exercise of patience he ever had, was that which was given him by his mother; she claimed a large share of what his father had bequeathed to him; who with great submission and respect gave her all that he believed her due, and over and above. But she demanded still more, which (her son, being advised by council) could not be given without wrong to his children, referred the whole business to arbitrators, and agreed that his mother should chuse them all. The day being come for their giving sentence, his mother was in one chamber of the house, and her son with his lady and a friend in another, where his employment was, to pray to God for such an issue as might be for his glory, and the procure-

procurement of peace. When the award was brought, altho' it was not advantageous to him, and there was a large penalty on whomsoever did not stand to it, he heard it with perfect calmness, and immediately signed it without objection and dispute.

12. Believing now that his mother was fully satisfied, he was no sooner returned home, than he caused *Te Deum* to be sung, beginning it himself, in thanksgiving for this happy conclusion. But God, to refine and purify him the more, permitted the cross to continue upon him. For his mother, not satisfied yet, found means to appeal from the award, without incurring the penalty. Her son did all that was possible for him to alter her design: After earnest prayer, and extraordinary fasting, he went to her, cast himself on his knees before her, and with the utmost reverence, humility, and submission, begged of her over and over with abundance of tears, "That she would please to take him and his family to herself; and after that she might dispose as she pleased of all the goods his father had left him." But neither would she consent to this, but persisted in her resolution of suing him at the Parliament of *Dijon*. This he might have prevented, and never stirred out of *Paris*, but in respect to her, he declined it, and determined to go to *Dijon*.

13. Being come thither, he found all mens minds fully prejudiced against him, which he gladly endured, that he might be partaker of the reproach, and honour the abasement of the Son of God: And when a person of piety acquainted him with the strange reports which were there spread abroad concerning him, he with admirable calmness raised his heart to God, and humbled himself.

himself before him. She asked, Whether it was true that injurious papers had been put in against his mother? he answered, "No; he had seen all the writings, and found them drawn with the respect due to a parent." She asked further, "If he was not much afflicted at her harsh manner of proceeding against him?" He said, "No; because I so much adore the order of God over me, that I cannot be afflicted at that which he permits to befall me. I am a great sinner, and therefore not only my mother, but all the world have just cause to take part against me."

14. She adds in a memorial, that many ways were proposed for adjusting the difference, but that it was the greatest difficulty in the world to bring his mother to join in any: That in the midst of these delays, she said to M. *de Renty*, "Sir, I shall willingly say the *Te Deum*, when once your business is ended." And that one day, when they believed it would be wholly concluded, he came to her with a chearful countenance, and said, "It is now time to say the *Te Deum*, since you had the goodness to promise it. And may I be so bold as to desire to say it with you? O what a great and wise God have we! who knows well how to do all things, as they ought and when they ought, not according to our precipitation, but his order, which is our sanctification!" Hereupon he said the *Te Deum*, with a spirit so elevated to God, as gave sufficient evidence of his being wholly filled with Him. And when afterwards all was broken off, without hopes of making up again, he said, "It is well: though nothing be done, it was very fit to return thanks to God, for doing his own will, and not that of a sinner, unworthy to be heard or regarded."

15. There

15. There passed many other things at *Dijon*, and since at *Paris*, during these differences, even to the death of his mother. But I doubt not, he who is now in the place of perfect charity, approves of my passing over in silence the failings of her to whom all his life he bore so much love and respect.

C H A P. V.

His Faith.

1. **M**R. *de Renty* studied with a particular care a solid foundation in this Virtue, knowing how all other virtues depend upon it, as on their root, their rule, and measure. And he possessed it in so high a degree, that he was more assured of the presence of God, and the truth of the mysteries of Christianity, than of the shining of the sun. He truly lived by Faith: This was the path wherein he walked, working all by the spirit thereof. He beheld things not with his bodily eyes, but with those that pierced deeper. Considering them not according to their present condition, or the order of Nature; but according to their future and eternal, their relation to Grace and Glory; regarding nothing but that it was, or might be a means of his own or others salvation.

2. Being fortified by this Faith, he was wont to say, he felt no difficulty at all, when (in his younger years) he was in a state of dryness and desertion, wholly deprived of sensible comforts. To which purpose he writes in one of his letters thus;
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"We seldom meet with persons addicted to prayer, that behave themselves well under inward desertion. They have no patience to wait for comfort. They fret themselves, and hurry this way and that, as if by their own means they could procure it, seeking for another support than that of Faith, which alone should suffice any spiritual man. For *the Just should live by Faith*, and on that foundation rest, in expectation of our Saviour, with patience; knowing these sensible comforts are but supplements to the littleness and cordials for the faintings of our faith."

3. Animated by this spirit, he relied not on any thing that came to him in an extraordinary way; resting neither on visions, miracles, revelation, nor inward motions, but solely on a pure and naked faith, to carry him to God.

4. He knew our perfection consists in nothing else, but the renewal of our soul by faith, hope, and charity: in performing to God the sacrifices of a lively faith, a perfect hope, and fervent charity. To cultivate and adorn his soul with these, was therefore his constant care; to unite it more and more intimately with God, thro' Faith working by love, and to give himself up with all his strength to his hidden and divine life.

5. Some years before his death, he was peculiarly in the contemplation of the Blessed Trinity. Whereof he gave this account to his spiritual guide: "I carry about with me ordinarily and experimental verity, and a plenitude of the presence of the Holy Trinity." And again, "I possess the Sacred Trinity with a plenitude of truth and clearness: and this is in so vigorous a manner, that my outward employment creates me no diversion at all." And another time he writ thus; JESUS CHRIST worketh the experience

gence of his kingdom in my heart, and I find him there my Lord and Master, and myself wholly his. I discover now a greater enlargement of my heart, but such as I am not able to express: only thus, It is a simple but most real sight of the Trinity, continually accompanied with praising, blessing, and offering all homage thereto."

C H A P. VI.

His Hope.

1. **A** Strong Faith cannot but produce a firm Hope and charity. A true belief in God, what he is in himself, and what he is to us, will work a strong affiance in him, and ardent charity towards him: as appeared in *M. de Renty*, who being grounded in faith, had also an undaunted hope, and inflamed affections.

2. The experience of the power and mercy of God, and faith in the infinite merits of our Redeemer, were the two pillars on which he built his Hope: and resting on these, he hoped all things. He used to say, that when he looked at himself, there was nothing so little wherein he apprehended not difficulty. But when he looked upon God, he could think nothing difficult, much less impossible.

3 Accordingly in all affairs, he relied not upon his own prudence, conduct, care, or any human strength or wisdom, but on God alone, saying, "When we have done our duty with great diffidence in ourselves, we ought to attend wholly on God, and wait his time." And thus he

writ

writ to a friend, " As for my children, I leave them in the hands of the holy Jesus, without determining any thing concerning them, not knowing what would befall to-morrow. He giveth me great confidence in his protection, which renders me altogether blind, without wishing any thing, but being ready for his Will in every thing."

4. Guarded with this perfect confidence, he feared nothing, but remained firm and resolute against all encounters. He walked securely in all places, at all times, in the streets, in the fields, by day and by night; travelling through woods and forests, reputed dangerous, and frequented by robbers, without any other defence than his trust in God. A friend told him one day, he was afraid to walk in the evening in the streets of *Paris* without a sword, and desired his advice; who told him, he had left off wearing a sword a long time, and advised him, after he had commended the business to God by prayer, to trust in his protection; assuring himself that his protection over us, is according to our reliance upon him."

5. One day a scaffold on which he stood with his workmen fell down, and hurt several of them: But it moved not him; his spirit remained in the same evenness as if nothing had happened; being settled on Him in whom is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning.

6. These words were found in one of his letters to his Director: " My soul being armed with confidence and love, fears neither the Devil nor Hell, nor all the stratagems of man. Neither think I at all on heaven or earth, but only how to fulfil the will of God in every thing."

C H A P. VII.

His love of G O D.

1. **T**HE sentiments M. de Renty had of the love of God, he thus expresseth in a letter to his Director; "In all I read in the scripture, I neither understand nor find any thing but this love. The very *end of the commandment is love, out of a sincere heart.* And this is acquired by faith in *Christ Jesus*, as the apostle observes in the following words: Faith uniteth us to him, whereby we sacrifice our souls and bodies, thro' his Spirit: which conducteth us to the compleat end of the law, to deliver us up to God, and to bring him down to us in charity, and a gracious inexplicable union; to whom be praise for ever! *Amen.*"

2. Writing to another, he says, "I thank our Lord, who hath exposed you to a perfect self-denial. This is the way to love; and our love of God is shewn, not so much in receiving gifts and graces from him, as in forgetting ourselves, in renouncing all things, and suffering constantly and courageously for him."

5. So inflamed was M. de Renty with this love, that all his thoughts, words, and works, were the fruits of it. All his virtues drew their original from this: it was the beginning, and motive, and end of all. "I cannot conceal from you, says he to a friend, that I have a fire in my heart, which burns and consumes without ceasing." And this divine fire was so ardent in
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his soul, that the flames thereof often burst forth into his exterior; and he hath owned, that whenever he pronounced the name of God, he tasted such a sweetness as could not be expressed.

4. One of his friends assures us, " he has often seen him so inflamed with love, that he appeared like one beside himself: " And that he has told him, when these transports were upon him, he was ready to cast himself into the fire, to testify his love of God. And one of his letters he concludes thus: " I must now hold my peace; yet when I cease to speak, the fire within that consumes me will not let me rest. Let us burn then, and burn wholly and in every part for God. Since we have no being but by him, why do we not live to him? I speak it aloud, and it would be my crown of glory to seal it with my blood."

5. To another he writes thus: " I know not what your intent was, in writing those words, *" My God, and my all."* Only you incite me thereby to return the same to you and to all creatures, *" My God and my all! My God and my all! My God and my all!* Is your heart full of it, and think you it possible that I can be silent on such an invitation? Be it known to you, that he is my God and my all; and if you doubt of it, I shall speak it a hundred times over. I shall add no more, for any thing else is superfluous to him that is truly penetrated with *" My God and my all."*

6. This Love of God wrought in him an incredible zeal for his honour, which he thus expresses to his Director; " One day being transported with earnest desire to be all a sacrifice to God, and all consumed for him, I offered up to him all I could, yea, and all I could not. I

would willingly if they had been mine, have made deed of gift to him of heaven and earth: and in another way I would gladly have been the lowest of all mankind. Yea, and if supported by his grace, I could have been content, to advance his glory, to have suffered the pains of the damned. In this disposition of a calm zeal, there is no sort of martyrdom, no degree of greatness or littleness, honour or dishonour, that passed not through my soul, and that I would not readily have embraced for the advancement of his glory. It is impossible to express one circumstance of what I felt. All I could do was, to give up my liberty to God, writing the deed in paper, and signing it with my blood."

7. See here the zeal of a man all on fire with the love of God! And the surest proof of love, conformity to his will. This intimate union of his will with God's, the object and end of all his actions, was indeed one of his singular graces, as it is the sum of all perfection. He writ thus to one concerning the Countess of *Châtres*, with whom he had the strictest friendship; "I must own, that during my absence from her, my heart was tenderly sensible of her pain. But my desire submits to the will of God, and when that is signified, he gives me grace to obey. I was not at *Paris*, but at *Citry*, when she departed; I was sent for post, but came two hours too late. Entering the town, I soon heard the news of her death. Presently I fixt myself to the will of God; whereupon I found no more alteration in my soul, than if she had been alive. I see his order in this, that I assisted her not at her death, and doubt not but he permitted it to her advantage."

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8. Another time he writ thus : " I have these three weeks had a fever, with a defluxion and an extreme weakness. My frame of mind during this condition, has been a simple adherence to the will of God. I have a heart willing and ready to receive any affliction that can befall me. I desire whatever is decreed from above, and beg it with all my heart."

9. In the year 1641, one of his children, whom he tenderly loved, died. When the news was brought him, he spoke not one word, nor shewed the least sign of disturbance: his affection to the child, yielding to his absolute conformity in the will of God.

10. At the end of the year 1643, his lady fell desperately sick, so that she was given over by her physicians, and left speechless, and without sense. This affected him in the most sensible part; and he broke into these words:

" I cannot deny but my nature is deeply affected with the sense of so great a loss; yet my spirit is filled with so wonderful a joy, to see myself in such a state, as to give up, and sacrifice to my God, a thing so near and dear to me, that if decency did not forbid it, I would give some open testimony of my readiness thereto." Hereby he evidenced the will of God to be absolutely his, that he not only willed whatever God willed, but also willed it as God doth, with pleasure and satisfaction. But it pleased God to restore his lady to her health, with respect (as we may believe) to the carriage of his faithful servant.

11. From this perfect subordination to the will of God, sprung his admirable tranquility; from this fountain flowed those rivers of peace which he possessed in so great perfection, that on the

most sudden surprisals, his spirit was not altered, nor put into any disorder. So that he could say from the abundance of his heart, "I comprehend not that thing you call mortification. He who finds no resistance in his spirit to any thing, is not capable of it. Whosoever willeth whatsoever God willeth, is pleased, whatsoever happens.

12. With this love of God, was joined so deep a reverence of him, as often cast him into trembling. And this unspeakable respect unto God's greatness, caused him often to walk in the fields bare-headed, even in rain, or the heat of the sun: and being asked by a friend, what it was kept him in that constant awe, and how he attained that wonderful reverence he bore to God at all times, in all employments? He answered, "The sight of his glorious majesty, which continually seems present by me, keeps me in exceeding awe, with a deep sense of his greatness and my own vileness. A mote in the sun is little, but I am far less in the presence of God."

13. And sure it is, that this deep sense of his own vileness, before the majesty of God, well becomes not only the greatest of sinners, but the holiest men upon earth. He that from a valley beholds the sun when it rises, and appears on the point of a high mountain, may think him that stands above to be near it, and almost able to reach it with his hand. But the same man notwithstanding beholds it at a vast distance above his head. And though, in reality, he is nearer than the other that stands in the valley, yet the proportion is so small as scarce deserves to be named, in respect to the total distance.

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14. This reverence of God occasioned in him a great reverence likewise to whatsoever was devoted to Him: As first, to all holy places; at his entrance into a church, his demeanor was highly modest and serious. He never sat down there. He would remain in it as long as possible he could; sometimes seven or eight hours together. If any person spoke to him in church, his answer was short; if a longer was required, he went out and gave it.

15. He had great respect, secondly, to holy persons, especially to priests, whom he highly honoured for their works sake. Whenever he met them, he saluted them with profound humility, and in his travel would alight off his horse to do it. When they visited him, he entertained them with great respect; at their going, waiting on them to the gate: and if any dined at his table, he gave them the upper hand, which civility he observed to his own chaplain

16. And as he had this reverence for them, so he had an earnest desire, that they might live according to the dignity of their calling. When he saw any who did not, he protested his heart melted into sorrow for them, and that he prostrated himself before our Saviour, and begged with tears some apostolical spirits. He often said, "Give us, O Lord, our poor fishermen. Men, simple in appearance, and vile in the eyes of men; but great and holy within, and fit to convert souls by their sanctity, prayers, and restless labours! And herein I discover a great mistake ordinary in the world, That outward greatness and pomp is the way to keep up men's credit, and make them more capable of
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doing good to their neighbours. O, no! It is grace that hath power upon souls, and an holy and humble life that gaineth hearts!"

C H A P. VIII.

His Love of Man.

S E C T. I.

Of his Love to Man in general.

1. **T**HE grand exercise of M. de Renty was to apply and unite himself to our Saviour, and from that union and example to derive all his virtues and good works. To mould himself after him was his general course, both in his inward tempers and outward behaviour. He never took his eye off this divine copy, but endeavoured to draw every line exactly, to pencil his true likeness, and make him his native and perfect original.

2. This was the scope of all his designs and cares, and particularly that of his charity to his neighbour; for which he propounded our Saviour as his grand exemplar, weighing the affection he shewed for men; marking what *he* had done, and what *he* had suffered for them, how *he* sought after, and conversed with them; how *he* instructed, comforted, and encouraged them, sometimes reproving, sometimes bearing with

with their infirmities; at all times carrying them in his bosom, yea, in the most intimate inclosure of his heart.

3. He well weighed what Christ had delivered concerning this virtue: that he had established it as the perfection of his law; that he had termed this command peculiarly his own; that he had expressly and solemnly bequeathed it to his followers, and enforced the execution of it upon them by all the strongest and most endearing ties; that he had made this virtue the distinctive character of those who were in reality his disciples; and that he had charged us to love our neighbour, according to the model, measure, and fashion that he had loved us. And accordingly he determined, as far as he could, to love his neighbour with the bent and spirit of his master. "I sigh (said he) after my Saviour Jesus, desiring to imitate and follow him whither he pleaseth. I beseech you, by your prayers, obtain for me his Spirit, to be my life, my whole life. Sigh and groan for me, after my God, that I may be wholly for Him in his Son, that I may follow him, and not live but by his Spirit."

4. Agreeably to this he endeavoured, in all the commerce he had with men, to unite himself most intimately to our Saviour, giving himself up as an instrument to be guided by his hand in the helping of others, beseeching him to breathe upon him his Spirit of love, recommended so much in his word, but more in his actions, and to inflame him with this sacred fire which he hath kindled in his church, that he might be wholly consumed with it. He consulted him in all his doubts concerning it, begging him to inspire what, and how, and when,
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and where, he should speak and act for the good of his neighbour: and that in him and by him it might all be done.

5. He looked upon men not according to their natural qualities, their beauty, nobility, riches, or worldly distinctions, but according to their more noble relations, and those common to all, viz. As creatures divine, the lively images of God, formed to praise and love him to all eternity; as purpled in the blood of Jesus, brothers and co-heirs with him, his inheritance bought with the price of his life, and a thousand pangs, and who therefore must be infinitely dear unto him, and most tenderly beloved of him.

6. In this capacity it was that he beheld men, and applied to their necessities. And hereby as he was highly useful to his neighbour, so he did not prejudice, but greatly advantage himself. He looked upon God and Christ in every man. He considered, it was they that demanded succour of him. And while he was performing with all his might whatever was necessary for the soul or body of the least of his brethren, believed verily it was God and Christ to whom he rendered that assistance. And the same thought should all make use of, who would benefit their neighbour without prejudice to themselves. Otherwise, a man shall sooner lose his own soul, than lead another to God.

7. The charity of this man of God, built on these foundations, was so enlarged, that it seemed to have no bounds; in that he loved not only all christians, but all men, without excepting any. *Thy commandments, says David, is exceeding broad*: the same dimensions had his charity; embracing the present, and absent, domesticks
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and strangers, friends and enemies, good and bad; esteeming all according to their degree, speaking (as he could) well of all, doing good to all, and ill to none.

8. There was not any considerable good work of a public nature, done at *Paris*, or within a great distance of it, wherein he had not a great share. There was no undertaking there, tending to the honour of God or good of men, of which he was not either the author, or promoter, or finisher; and very often all these together. He was one at all the meetings of piety; and of many the very soul. He kept correspondence throughout the whole kingdom, concerning works of charity, receiving letters from all parts, desiring his advice in all difficulties that occurred, in the erecting or perfecting hospitals, seminaries of religion, and fraternities of virtuous persons, associating together for the better applying themselves to their own and others salvation, and the managing all sorts of good works.

9. From *Caen* one writes of him thus: "Mr. *de Renty* was our support and refuge in the execution of all our designs, relating to the service of God, the saving of souls, and the relief of the poor and distressed. To him we continually wrote, and from him we received counsel and succour on all occasions. Nor have we met with any since his death to whom we could have the like recourse in the things of God." Another from *Dijon* writes thus: "We cannot but acknowledge the great benefit this province has received from Mr. *de Renty*. Wherever he came, he hath wonderfully advanced all works of piety. We may truly say, that his days were filled

filled with the fulness of God. Nor do we believe he lost one minute of time, in which he did not either speak or act something for his service."

10. He applied himself to the necessities of the *English*, the *Irish*, the captives in *Barbary*, and of the missions in the *Levant*; took great pains for the support of the hospital at *Marseilles*; laboured much for the relief of galley slaves, and contributed much to the advancing the affairs of *New France* in *America*. He had a design likewise to purge all trades and manufactures from the corruptions which had grown upon them, so that men might live upon them like christians; which thing he begun and perfected in two of them.

11. The Scripture he most studied next the life of our blessed Saviour, to qualify himself for all good works, was *St. Paul's* description of charity, in the 13th chapter of his first epistle to the *Corinthians*. And whosoever is exercised in the virtues there described, will not run in vain, nor labour in vain. Indeed the more any one is animated with this spirit, the more shall he advance holiness in others. Yea, though his words be few and ordinary. For our words do not derive their force from the mouth that speaks, but from the disposition of the heart, and the power of the spirit that dwells there.

12. To qualify himself to be more extensively useful to his neighbour, *Mr. de Renty*, to the natural abilities God had given him, and to the learning he had acquired in his youth, had by his industry added several smaller parts of knowledge: and that not only for his own use, but to teach them to others, whereby to help

help themselves. Yea, he abased himself to learn the meanest skill, which might be any way useful to his neighbour. One day in *Paris* he carried a friend with him to a poor man, who got his living by making wicker-baskets. He therefore finished a basket which he had begun some days before, with design as soon as he had learned it, to teach some poor people in the country to make them, to help to get their living. He then left the basket with the poor man, and a piece of money for teaching him.

13. Indeed he took upon him all shapes, transformed himself into all figures, condescended to all things for the good of his neighbour: all his thoughts, words and actions, being wholly cast in the mould of charity: which made him say one day, "Methinks my soul is all charity, and I am not able to express with what ardour and strange expansion my heart is renewed in the divine life of my Saviour, burning in love to all mankind."

S E C T. II.

His Charity to the Poor.

1. **W**ITH regard to the poor, Mr. *de Renty's* thoughts stayed not on their habit or outward appearance; but passing further, he beheld under these, with the eye of faith, Jesus Christ present and dwelling in them. And as he burned with an ardent affection to our Lord, so he loved them tenderly, succoured them

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with all his might, and left nothing unattempted for their sakes. And with these eyes, not those of nature, must every one behold the poor, that will love them indeed, and have bowels of compassion for them.

2. From the year 1641, he invited to dinner two poor men twice a week, on *Tuesdays* and *Fridays*. But increase of business obliged him five or six years after, to reduce it to one day, commonly *Thursday*; when he invited three; and willing to join spiritual alms to corporal, he sought out such as seemed most to need instruction. To this end, while at *Paris*, after his morning devotions, he went to *St. Anthony's* gate, and took such as were newly arrived, whom courteously saluting, he brought home (in winter to the fire) made them sit down, and with a cordial affection, which appeared in his whole behaviour, instructed them in the chief points of christianity. While they sat at table, he served them himself, setting before them with his own hands the dishes brought in by his servants and children. After dinner, he waited on them himself to the gate, and dismissed them with an alms. This he continued to his death, and when he could not do it in person, his lady did the same to so many poor women.

3. Besides many other charities at his own house, he endeavoured the general relief of all the poor in *Paris*, and the parts adjacent; busied himself to understand their wants, studied ways of redress, and carefully pursued them. What he could not accomplish himself, he commended to others, spake for them, begged for them, bought necessaries for them; laboured to establish settled courses of living for men and children

children that were destitute, and when he could not at present provide for them abroad, maintained them at his own house till he could.

4. He was the first that motioned some relief for the poor *English*, driven by persecution out of their own country. He engaged persons of quality in the purchasing of lands for their subsistence. When it was done, himself undertook the charge of distributing one part of this charity. This he performed monthly, going to them a-foot, and commonly alone entering their chamber, he saluted them with all tenderness and respect, and gave them their allowance wrapt up in paper.

5. In all his visits to the poor, after a general survey of their wants, he examined in particular as well their spiritual as bodily necessities; and endeavoured in the first place to mark their inclinations, their passions, their ill habits; what vices were predominant in them, and what were the chief infirmities: that like a prudent physician he might apply fit remedies, and teach them how to make the true use of their poverty.

6. As to their temporal necessities, he considered the capacity, industry, trade or employment of each: for tradesmen, he considered what tools or materials were necessary to let them to work. These he provided, either redeeming their own, or buying new. He then gave them provision for two or three days, and provided them work not only for themselves, but also for their wives and children. Afterwards he bought some of their work, which he bestowed in alms upon others, and took order for the quick sale of the rest,

coming to them from time to time to see if all went well, and encourage them to take pains.

7. To these we may add, his charity to poor prisoners, whom he visited, comforted, and relieved, and when he found it expedient for them, (which he always first considered) used all means for their enlargement.

8. There was in *Low Normandy* one who had been a prisoner for several years, and tho' innocent, was in great extremity. Many had endeavoured his release but without success, because of a powerful adversary. The thing being commended to Mr. *de Renty*, after a just information of the case, he committed the prosecution of it to his own advocate, made a report of it to the council, and went frequently in person to solicit it.

9. But notwithstanding, perceiving the poor man's cause to hang long, he changed his purpose, and writ to his adversary, offering, if the business might be referred to him, to take a journey into *Normandy* immediately. When he came to the town, he went directly to the prison, and after an exhortation to the prisoners, seconded by his alms, he told the poor man his desire, and exhorted him to pray to God for a blessing on his endeavours, and to rest in hope, that by some means or other he should shortly be delivered.

10. He then went to the other's house; whence he returned to the prison for information on some difficulties that occurred. Finding all the prisoners together at their usual devotions, he waited till they had done. Having then received information, he went back to the other,

other, with whom he came to such an agreement, that this poor man, after a world of misery, during nine years imprisonment, was at length set at liberty. He maintained him eight days at his own house, advising and exhorting him every evening: and at his departure persuaded him to go and see his (former) adversary; whom he now found as tractable and friendly, as before he had been severe.

S E C T. III.

His Charity to the Sick.

1. **I**F his charity to the poor was thus great, it was still greater to such poor as were sick. He was not content to assist these in one or two ways; but they found in him, and often in one visit, a benefactor, a physician, apothecary, surgeon, pastor, friend and servant.

2. In the year 1641, he learned to let blood, and several parts of surgery. He acquainted himself likewise with the manner of making up most sorts of medicines; and he consulted with the physician by whom he was instructed in the principal parts of the art of physick. Whenever he went abroad, he had with him a surgeon's box, and powders for the cure of most ordinary diseases; which he used with great dexterity, and with equal prudence, never advancing beyond his knowledge.

3. In his visits to the sick, he never shunned any service necessary for them, and in his power to perform; as making their beds, helping them to bed, making their fire, settling in order their little household-stuff; hoping thereby to win upon their affections, and draw them to God with more facility.

4. In every family, he took an opportunity to enquire whether God was served there? And whether any quarrels or differences were among them, which he took care to make up without delay. And he never left any without providing for all their necessities, which he took notice of with incredible diligence, sweetness, and respect; dispensing with other business that he might have time to hear all their complaints.

5. Neither did he only visit the sick, but they also sought him, and would find him out wheresoever he came, if they were able to go abroad. The sick, the weak, the lame, or otherwise infirm, flocked to him from all quarters: he might often be seen encompassed with them: some requesting his medicines, some his alms, some his counsel. He treated all, as a true disciple of his great master, with the like diffusive charity; and stood in the midst of them with the like goodness and patience, endeavouring to do good, and to minister comfort to all.

6. Nor did all his charity decline the care of those diseases which nature cannot behold without horror and aversion. During his stay at *Dijon*, he was informed of one who having been among a company of soldiers, was left by them in so noisom a condition, that none would

would come near her, and the house where she lodged was going to turn her out of doors. He went instantly to the house, perswaded them to keep her there, and hired a woman to attend her. Then he provided her proper physic and nourishment, which he brought her with his own hands: in the mean time reading to her every day, instructing and comforting her. By this means he at length not only retrieved her from the jaws of death, but induced her to spend the rest of her life in a virtuous and christian manner.

S E C T. IV.

His Zeal for the Salvation of his Neighbour.

1. **M**R. *de Renty* being continually inflamed with the love of God, incessantly sought all ways, and used all means to make him more known and loved by all men, both here and eternally. And, his Zeal had no bounds; it extended not only to all *France*, but to all the world; insomuch that he said to an intimate friend, "I am ready to serve all men, not excepting one, and to lay down my life for any one." He earnestly desired to enlighten with the knowledge of God, and inflame with his love, the whole world; of which *Paris* being as it were an epitome, he went through all the quarters and streets of that vast city, searching what he could remove or bring in, for the glory of God, and salvation of souls. And the same spirit which moved him hereto, blest his endeavours to rectify what was amiss, and to strengthen

en what was right. This he did in so many several ways, as a man would think it impossible: But what cannot a man do that is zealous, disinterested, and full of God?

2. He performed what possibly he could of his own person, not sparing any pains, nor losing one moment: and where his power fell short, he engaged others: and in all places he laboured, as much as in him lay, to induce such as desired to follow Christ, to join together, and assist one another in working out both their own and their neighbour's salvation. Many such societies he established at *Caen*, at *Amiens*, at *Dijon*, and in several parts of *Burgundy*; whose endeavours being animated by a true zeal for God, were blessed with unexpected success.

3. To arm one who had thus engaged, against the difficulties he met with, he writ to him thus:

"I am very sensible of the present storms that you endure; though there is no reason why men should alarm you thus, seeing they have no cause of reproach from your design, nor have you done any thing against the gospel, yet I do not wonder at these crosses. 'Tis sufficient to know that you desire to follow Jesus Christ; therefore you must reckon contradiction to be your portion in these days of your flesh; only be firm in your confidence in your Lord, suffering none of these storms to trouble you, or to obscure that light which hath moved you to, and guided you in this business. God deliver you from the reasonings of flesh and blood, which at such times are apt to multiply upon us: be assured, that if you hearken not to them, God will manifest himself unto you; he will comfort and fortify you in faith and experience of the gift of his Holy Spirit."

4. To another he writ thus: "Blessed for ever be the Holy Jesus, for the good beginning of those you mention. If the other had a little more courage to break her fetters, it would be a great step: and surely there needs no such deliberation to give up ourselves to him, although he be to the *Jew* a stumbling-block, and to the *Greeks* foolishness. Not that God hath any need of our good parts or excellent qualities, who commonly confounds the wisdom of the wise, by little things which he chuseth. Blessed be that littleness which is accounted weakness, and yet overthroweth all the power and prudence of the world."

5. We mentioned before his endeavour to reform trades from the abuses and corruptions which, in process of time, they had contracted, and to sanctify them, that some at least in each might live like the primitive christians, in common; deducting from their stock only their necessary maintenance, and bestowing the rest on the poor. And, at length, he in part effected it; so that there are now two companies in *Paris*, one of taylor's, the other of shoemakers, and of these in several quarters of the city, (and the like there are at *Thouloze*) who live in community; rising, eating, working, and praying together morning and evening; calling each other brothers, and living together in the strictest unity and concord.

6. Passing one day by the hospital of *St. Gervase*, and hearing it was devoted to the lodging of poor travellers, he desired leave of the Superior to instruct them in the evening, when they were met together. And this he did from that time every night, coming thither on foot, and
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commonly alone, summer and winter. After instructing them, he joined with them in prayer, which he concluded with his alms. And this he continued many years, till some church-men, moved by his example, undertook that work, which they continue to this day.

7. His tenderness of heart for these poor people was exceeding great, joined with such humility as cannot easily be expressed. When he met any one at the hospital, he saluted him with great respect, put him before him, and talked with him bare-headed. If any kneeled to him, he did the like to them, and continued on his knees till they rose first. One of them observing him diligently, and knowing him to be the lord of the place where he himself lived, was deeply affected at the sight, and came and fell at his feet: Mr. *de Renty* did the like to him, and continued in that posture a long time, resolving not to rise before the poor man.

8. Going one day to visit the Holy Place of *Mont-Matre*, after his prayers said in the church, he retired into a desert part of the mountain, near a little spring. There kneeled down to prayer, and that ended, dined on a piece of bread and a draught of water. After dinner he took out his Testament, and read a chapter on his knees, bare-headed, with extraordinary reverence. Just then came a poor man, saying his prayers. Mr. *de Renty* rose up to salute him, and fell into discourse with him concerning God, and that so powerfully, that the poor man striking his breast, fell down upon the ground to adore that great God. Immediately after, came a poor maid to draw water at the well, whom he asked, What she was? She answered a servant.

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"But do you know, said he, you are a christian, and to what end you was created?" Whence he took occasion so to instruct her, that confessing she had never before thought of the end of her creation, she promised from henceforth deeply to consider, and seriously to pursue it.

9. In his first return from *Dijon*, he stopped three or four times in the way, to instruct the poor passengers; and once went of the road to shew some labourers in the field, how to sanctify the work they were about.

10. A young maid in *Paris*, having been very cruelly used by her uncle, fell into such a disorder, that in a fury she accused our Saviour as the cause of her misery, for abandoning her to such a man. In this horrible condition, she received the sacrament several times in a day; on purpose to do despite to our Saviour, and provoke him to finish her destruction. Mr. *de Renty* was no sooner informed of this, than he hastened to find her out; as he did, alter eight days search, in the very act of communicating. He immediately conveyed her thence, and took so great care both of her soul and body, that she returned to herself, and gave ample testimonies of her repentance.

11. As the design of advancing the salvation of men, is attended with much doing and much suffering, it is necessary for him that undertakes it, to fortify himself with courage and patience; and both these were most eminently in M. *de Renty*; being, in the first place, full of courage, resolute, and laborious; employing his body as if he had two more in reserve when that was spent; dispatching more in one half hour, than
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others did in many days. Very bold he was in entering upon difficulties, and quick in extricating himself from them.

12. A lady who had left much to pious uses, made him her executor. Being informed her friends, men of eminent power, were much displeased, he replied, " I never moved her to bestow any of her estate this way; but since her piety has prompted her to it, I shall not be dismayed with any power that shall oppose it: my care is to perform her will, and for other things I take no thought."

13. Seeing one day some gentlemen fighting, he threw himself between their swords, laying hold on those who seemed most outrageous. At first they quarreled with him; but in a short time were friends, both with him and with one another.

14. His zeal was accompanied, secondly, with unparalleled patience; a virtue highly requisite for him that would save the souls of men; seeing he must endeavour to win their hearts, at which he is to make their first entrance; not following his own will or inclinations, but theirs; becoming all things to all men; waiting long for their conversion, and attending without being tired or discouraged, though by all his labour he should win but little ground) the favorable moments wherein they may yield to his motives. He must like this holy man, not only be willing to endure hunger, thirst, heat, cold, wet, weariness, and other outward pains, inseparably attendant on employments of this nature; but also the importunities, complaints, passions, the repulses, the contempts and injuries that are continually to be expected in them.

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15. While he was employed in instructing the poor travellers in the hospital of *St. Gervase*, a man who was settled there looking upon it as an intrusion into his office, came to him, as he was in the midst of the poor, and with many injurious and reproachful words, forbade him to come any more. *Mr. de Renty* having heard him without any emotion, replied, "The poor people had much need of instruction; and since he would not be at the pains himself, he prayed him not to hinder one that would." This did not satisfy him at all, but he came four days together to drive out *Mr. de Renty*, interrupting him as soon as he began; but he still received him with the same spirit, and at length overcame evil with good.

16. One day he visited a person who, from a groundless suspicion, had cruelly used his wife; who understanding his business, entertained him very coarsely, giving him much opprobrious language, lifting up his hand to strike him, and offering to thrust him out of doors. *Mr. de Renty* replied not one word, but after some time, drew near again, embraced him, and accosted him with such soft language, that he was persuaded, at length, to go to confession, which he had not done in twelve years before, and to be fully reconciled to his wife; insomuch that he lived and died a good christian.

17. Another time, visiting a poor old man that was sick, he began, as usual, to speak of spiritual things. But the old man, instead of listening, fell into a passion, telling him, He understood those things better than he. *Mr. de Renty* told him, he would be glad to be instructed; and after a great deal of patience and attention,
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taking advantage from some things in that weak discourse, to convince and inform him better, he proceeded so happily, that the rest of his days he led a true christian life.

18. His patience in bearing with the faults and imperfections of others, as it was truly exemplary, so it never took away or weakened his desire to correct them, for which he only waited a proper occasion. When he intended to reprove another, he commonly first accused himself, to prepare them by his example. Having such an intention, he began a discourse of that openness with which christians ought to tell one another the truth; for want of which we grow grey in our vices, and often carry them with us to our graves; saying, "He should hold himself extremely obliged to any who would shew him that kindness." His friend finding his heart exceedingly softened, besought him to deal freely and plainly with him, in telling him whatsoever he saw amiss in him; which thing he then did.

19. But his patience did not in the least break in upon that fortitude which is often requisite in the things of God, for the good of our neighbour, and for the worthy preserving of our just authority. He knew severity must be used sometimes, especially when we have to do with stubborn offenders; and accordingly advised a friend concerning a third person, "Take heed of humbling yourself before that man: the abasing yourself in this case, would both prejudice him, and dishonour the cause of God. Reprove him severely and roundly."

20. And not in these instances only, but in all others, his zeal was accompanied both with freedom and prudence. For though his humility
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has concealed many of his inward graces and outward actions, yet many likewise has his zeal brought to light, where he judged it necessary for the glory of God, or the good of his neighbour: concerning which he thus wrote to a virtuous lady:

" Give me leave to speak my thoughts of that liberty we ought to use, in communicating freely the gifts of God bestowed upon us, to such persons as may reap fruit from them; not stifling them in ourselves, whereby we obstruct a second fruit, which God expects from his graces. We should consider ourselves set in the world, as a chrystal, which placed in the middle of the universe, would give free passage to all the lights which it receives from above: so ought we to impart all the talents we receive, and this without disguise, or the least claim of property.

" Farther: As the chrystal, if several torches were set under it, would transmit the beams of them all towards heaven; so whatever honours or commendations we receive from below, should freely pass through us up to God; for God hath therefore bestowed upon us such things as are praise-worthy, not that the praise thereof should rest upon us, but that it may pass through us to Him, that he may be blessed and praised in all things."

21. Yet his zeal, though free, was not so indiscreet, as to be its own herald upon every appearance of doing good; but was very circumspect in weighing all circumstances. Accordingly in the same letter he gives this wise advice, touching the order and measure which are necessary to be observed in this communication.

" To some we must lay open our hearts freely and exactly ; to others more reservedly ; to others altogether locked up, concealing from them what we see no disposition in them to make good use of."

22. Zeal indeed should always be attended with Prudence, to consider things well, and execute them in the best manner ; to prevent mischiefs, or redress them with as much of sweetness, and as little acrimony as possible : and in desperate cases, or where the cure would prove worse than the disease, to suffer and pass them over, some souls having defects as it were, incorrigible, which God permits to perfect them by humility ; and others likewise, that have an intercourse with them, by patience and charity.

23. One great point of Prudence requisite in a zealous man, is, neither to hurt his body by too much labour, nor his mind with too much business. As to the latter of these, Mr. *de Renty* took especial care so to manage all his works of charity, that his piety might not be hindered but advanced thereby, indispensibly performing all his exercises of devotion ; and while he conversed most with his neighbours, reserving a considerable part, both of the day and night, for conversing with God. As to the other, he thus expressed himself to a clergyman, who had impaired his health by extreme labour :

" Give me leave, Sir, to tell you plainly, that you should not impose too much upon yourself, lest for want of moderation, you render yourself altogether unserviceable. The enemy usually takes no small advantage of such free and well-disposed natures ; you are not your own, but a debtor to all men. Preserve yourself, therefore,

therefore, not by indulging your body, but by laying upon it no more than it is able to bear."

24. Being at *Citry*, in the latter end of the year 1642, he had a strong impression upon his spirit, that at his going to *Paris* he should find a new employment about the poor, and be much taken up therein. Accordingly, two days after his return thither, some persons came to advise with him, about a course of relieving all such poor in the city as were ashamed to beg. He undertook to visit a fourth part of them, and to assist them according to their necessities. An employment sufficient to take up the whole time of one man, which yet he performed, notwithstanding the multitude of his other occupations; so that we must say, without a special assistance, he could not have done and suffered what he did; but God, who hath limited our strength of body, can increase it when and how he pleaseth.

25. Sometimes he received before-hand only a present impulse of something to be done, without any particular discovery. As when he was much pressed in spirit to go to *Pontois*, without understanding any reason for it; yet believing it to be the call of God, he immediately undertook the journey; where unexpectedly he met with a nobleman of great quality, who was come from a province far distant, on purpose to be instructed by Mr. *de Renty*, how to serve God, which he had, till then, little known, and less practised.

26. But though this great fervant of God had an excellent faculty of assisting all, yet was he more eminently assistant to some particular persons, for the healing of their souls, and leading them on apace in the narrow way of perfection. I shall mention one only, the Countess of *Chatres*, who being deep in the affections of the world, as are most young ladies of her quality, it pleased God to inspire her with a desire to ask advice of Mr. *de Renty*; this he gave her with so happy success, that he himself was astonished at it. In less than a year, she was so perfectly disengaged from all those little conveniences and accommodations, which our ladies persuade themselves are absolutely necessary, that one offering her something of this kind, which she was formerly fond of, she answered, "I thank God, I have quitted this, and many more things for the love of God, and yet find no want at all."

27. God gave him light to discern her proper way, to teach her to renounce herself, and advance in the paths of solid virtue, and to support her in great inward afflictions; and she, on her part, resigned up herself to his guidance, and forced herself to put his advice in execution: a thing very requisite in those who would make use of the conduct of others to good purpose.

28. Though this happy intercourse, accompanied with such signal blessings, had contracted a strict and perfect friendship between them, yet he was very wary and reserved in his conversation with her; visiting her only when the work of God required it, and neither speaking nor staying with her any longer than was precisely

precisely necessary. This she thought a little harsh, and complained of it to a friend, whom she knew to have some power with him, saying, " Mr. *de Renty* extremely mortifies me with his civilities and reservedness. I have great need to see him often, and yet cannot obtain it. Nay, when we are together, he will not sit down, except when I am sick, or not able to stand any longer; and always with his hat in his hand. I beg you to tell him, what out of respect, I dare not, what inquietude I suffer, to see his behaviour such towards me, who ought to be continually under his feet."

The person acquainting him with this, he answered, " I proceed in this manner, because my duty to God and to the Countess of *Chatres* require it. My Saviour obliges me to converse with her; but I must do no more than what is necessary, and so retire, for which this posture is most convenient. If we sat down, we should forget ourselves, and talk more than is necessary, and perhaps pass on things unprofitable: therefore we ought both to stand upon our guard."

29. Those who undertake the conduct of souls, ought seriously to consider this answer; and to be fully persuaded, That the business does not consist in speaking much to them, but in disposing him to speak to God, and in making them fit for God to speak to them.

30. In the year 1647, having visited one afflicted with great pains, he thus writ to his Director:

" I have

"I have been with the person you know of, and have told her what I thought suitable to her condition. I acquainted her, How we ought to lay this sure foundation, that we are nothing but weakness and misery itself; and that God from this insufficiency of ourselves to all good, means to extract humility and diffidence of ourselves, obliging us thereby to fly to his Son, to find strength in Him, and remedy for all our miseries.

"As concerning myself, I have not much to say. Only I find within myself, by the mercy of God, a great tranquility in his presence, through the spirit of Jesus Christ, and such an inward experience of eternal life, as I am not able to express. Yet I find myself so naked and barren, that I wonder at the condition I am in, and by which I discourse. In my converse with this person, I begun my speech not knowing how to pursue it. After the second sentence I had not the least foresight of what should be the third; and so of the rest. Not but that I seem to have a perfect knowledge of the things I speak, in such a manner as I am capable of it. But I only utter what is given me, and in the same way as it is communicated, I communicate it to others."

C H A P. IX.

His outward Behaviour, and Conduct of Business.

1. **M**R. *de Renty* being sensible, that even our outward behaviour is of great consequence in the service of our neighbour, being that which makes the first impression upon them, did whatever he could for the well composing his exterior, keeping his gestures, motions, looks, and all parts of his conversation in such a harmony, as he judged fittest to draw his neighbour to God.

2. He was very modest, always calm and inviolably equal. Among all the things I observed in Mr. *de Renty*, (says one of his intimate friends) what first affected me was, His rare modesty and great evenness of behaviour. There was something in his looks which carried so much reverence in it, one might easily judge, he was always actually in the presence of God."

3. In every condition and employment whatsoever, he was the same in his looks, gestures, words, and actions, whether alone or in company, with rich or poor, strangers, friends, before his children or servants, yea even before his footman, in the country or town, at the table and every where.

4. And

4. And such a constant equality was the more observable, because of his natural disposition, which was not slow, heavy and phlegmatick, but choleric, hot and active. But the exact and perpetual care he had over himself, had wholly inverted his nature, and brought him to a behaviour, as well as temper, directly opposite to those he took from his mother's womb.

5. Another of his friends writes of him thus: "That which pleased me most in him was, His great recollection and intimate union with God: attended with such a wonderful peace of mind, as shone forth in his countenance, and begot a kind of devotion in his beholders. This union, methought, was ever the same, without any sign of distraction or levity, or any word not necessary, no complaisance or human regard ever forcing him to scatter his spirit. Not but he was full of civility; but still so as to look more within himself than without."

6. And indeed this continual presence of God, so wholly took up his spirit, that no unusual accident, or object, or any thing rare or extraordinary could divert him. I never saw him admire any thing in the world, nor fix his eyes upon any curiosity whatever. And his gait in the streets was so recollected, modest and equal, without gazing on any thing, that a man might see Jesus Christ was his way, his employment and his all.

7. In his speech he was very reserved, by choice as well as by nature. In whatever company it concerned him to speak, he did so in his course, with a composed demeanour, and

and words few, but material. He was never known forward or eager to speak, or in speaking, to do it with a higher tone than ordinary. If he gave an account of any business, he did it so briefly, and in words so pertinent, that it was a very hard matter to find one that spoke better, and yet less than he.

8. Things that were unprofitable, or the news of the times, were never the subject of his discourse; but always something pertaining to the kingdom of God. And when the conversation diverted to worldly things, he either took leave of the company, or stole away without.

9. And when he talked even of good things, it was with care and moderation; saying, "There was much need of sparingness and sobriety, when we speak even of the things of God, lest it turn to no good account: and that it was a great trouble to him, when among serious persons, to hear them often spend precious time in talking of virtue at large, and to find them departing from such conferences, with dry, empty, and dissipated spirits."

10. As to conduct of business, his method was, seriously to consider things, before any resolution; and if after his own sense given, he found another's to be better, he readily quitted his own. After he had resolved, he was prompt, firm and constant in the execution of it. But sometimes, when he had gone through the difficulties of a design, left it to a friend to finish; not out of inconstancy, but to gain time for undertaking more, as well as to avoid the honour of it.

11. In

11. In all affairs that concerned the service of God, he had an immoveable constancy. And besides the force of his words, there appeared in his face an extraordinary assurance, (though his ordinary deportment was always sweet and quiet) which particularly appeared in all meetings, where he manifested such a spirit, that those who beheld him, felt themselves struck with an awful regard. His proposals generally carried so much light and force in them, that all were constrained to acquiesce in his determination. But if any disputed his reasons, he knew how to enforce them; and if they chanced to make another reply, (which was a thing that exceeding rarely happened) he said not one word more but his very silence, and the steadiness of his countenance, restrained any further dispute. The meeting ended, he would go to that person and ask his pardon; informing him, "That what he aimed at, was, not to make good his own opinion, but to advance the cause of God; in all other things he was ready to yield to every one."

12. But of all things he took care, not to overcharge himself with business, to the prejudice of his piety. He knew that outward employments, even the most holy, may be hindrances to inward holiness. Wherefore he was careful not to overburden himself with them, and very vigilant, that they should not distract and dissipate him, nor secularize his soul, but serve only as means to elevate and unite him more to God.

13. And

13. And God so blessed him herein, that in the multitude of business, he was still in a continual recollection. A familiar friend asking him, Whether in that throng of employments, he observed his usual two hours of prayer? he answered, "When I can, I keep three hours, sometimes four or five; but when occasion offers to serve my neighbour, I easily quit them, for God of his mercy hath given me the grace, to be inseparably with him, even in the crowd of business." To the same purpose he writ to his director: "I continue my devotion out of the time and place of prayer, even in the midst of converse and business; and I tell you sincerely, though I perform every thing so ill, yet I find little difference of times for prayer, being recollected continually." And the same might be gathered (as was observed before) from his modesty and composed countenance, clearly evidencing, that his soul was wholly and constantly in application to God, from whom he drew light and strength, for the conduct of all his business. Of which he thus wrote to his director; "My recollection hinders no business at all, but furthers it. Without it I should have a solicitous desire of doing all myself: whereas I act now in a most calm way, in which I have no share; for it is our Lord that doth all." In another letter thus: "Finding myself one day burthened with variety of businesses, I had a desire to draw off my mind wholly; and at the same instant it was done. Since that time they create me no trouble, and I dispatch them more readily without thinking of them. This grace hath been often renewed in me, (altho'

in several manners) which I acknowledge to be very great, because it preserves me disengaged, even in the multiplicity of business."

14. If after he had done his part, any design miscarried, he rested well satisfied. On such an occasion he thus writ to a friend; "We may take up good designs, and God often inspires them; yet when he is pleased to permit a contrary event, we must adore his secret will, which brings more of mercy in the crossing of them, than if they had succeeded. We should always be jealous over our spirit, that it fix not upon any thing." And again, "Our Lord has his designs, which he effects by such means as we would not at all make choice of: the reason is, because he would break our wills, and abate our dependencies upon earth. Therefore he often crosses our best undertakings, being more jealous of the sacrifice of our hearts, than any thing else, how specious so ever."

15. I cannot better conclude this chapter, than with a letter writ to his director on this subject:

"For these three or four months I have been as it were, continually employed in outward works; as removing from place to place, new building a church, taking care of the sick, reconciling differences, conferring with all sorts of people. Yesterday hearing those words of the gospel read, "Thou art troubled about many things," it was said to my heart, "Thou art not troubled about many things," giving me to understand, that the things we are employed upon, according to the will of God, do not create us that trouble; and that

Martha

Martha was not reprov'd for doing the work, but for doing it too solicitously. Our Saviour intimating to her, that no business should be done with inordinate agitation of spirit. Since our great business is, to hear the eternal word, and act nothing with disturbance, but all in peace by his Spirit."

"I received hereby a great support in the performance of these petty exterior offices, and made no difficulty at all to yield myself up to this holily-disordered divine order. At the same time I enjoyed such a sensible impression of God, yet excelling all sense, that if I had been thrown like a bowl, I could never have lost the sight of my God. Our Lord turns this bowl in a strange manner, even as it pleaseth him. And these several turnings are all for the soul's advantage, whereby she is fashioned for every occasion, that she may do nothing for or by herself, but all for God, and according to him.

"I see likewise that one whom God employs in these low affairs, if he follow them with the same fidelity, is as acceptable to God, as one that is employed in the most noble functions. Will nothing please you but to convert worlds? You shall be content to carry stones: and sometimes to sit still and do nothing. You are then to offer the sacrifice of patience. And I believe it is a thousand times more rare, to find a soul thus faithful in patience, and content to do no more than God would have him, than faithful in actions that appear abroad."

"I have one word more to tell you; which is, that I am really ashamed and confounded,

that I do no more for God; which indeed, with the sense of my unfitness for any thing that is good, would work me much torment, did I not consider, he is all-sufficient, and doth with us as he pleaseth."

C H A P. X.

Of his Death.

1. **O**N the 11th of April, 1649, he found himself very ill, and having concealed his sickness five days, was then constrained to his bed. He endured great pains all over his body, with which his mind too was so much affected, that he profest, if God had not assisted him against the ravings of his imagination, he should have spoken more extravagancies than any madman. "There was much he said, in such a condition to humble him. But it was the duty of a sinner, to honour God in all conditions wherein he should place him."

2. During these great pains and torments, and during the whole course of his sickness, his ordinary employments consisted in affectionate elevations of his soul to God, in thoughts and words of blessing, praise, and submission to whatsoever was laid upon him, and of meekness and perfect obedience to all that attended and had the care of him, with such

such an humble and contented spirit, that he thought all well done, though sometimes it was otherwise.

3. His patience never gave way to any complaint. And when his keeper who was of the hospital of charity, with whom he had visited so many poor and sick, importuned him to declare his pain, "O Sister, said he, how does the love of God wipe away all pain? The servants of God suffer nothing." Another friend asking, if his pain was not great? He answered, No. The other replied. "He thought it was." "It is true, said he, that I am much clogged with my disease; but I feel it not, because I do not think of it."

4. Being urged to take some sweet things, he refused, saying, "These make little for life or for death." Yet he refused not physick, but took it with a cheerful countenance, though it was very bitter, and he had a great difficulty in swallowing. Indeed when one told him of another medicine which had done great cures, he answered, "Patience is a sovereign remedy," intimating his unwillingness to try it. Yet when it was brought, he took it without any reluctance.

5. His sickness increasing more and more, yet he never called for any thing to refresh him: and when they had forced clean sheets upon his bed, and a pillow, which he had before refused, he said, "Lo! here lies a gentleman at his ease."

6. Feeling some joy arise in him, upon the sight of a person of his acquaintance, with whom he had held a strict correspondence in spiritual things, who came out of the country

on purpose to visit him: he immediately repeated thrice over with great fervour, "I desire nothing more but God."

7. Reflecting on the Poor, the constant objects of his tenderest care, he said to his lady, "I recommend the Poor to you. Will not you have a great care of them? You will perform it better than I. Fear nothing: what you give to them, will not lessen the rest."

8. The greatest part of the first week of his illness, and some part of the second likewise, was spent by him in works of mercy, appointing of alms, and giving orders for letters to be writ into several provinces, about business of charity wherewith he stood charged, and whereof he gave an exact account.

9. Many persons of quality coming to visit him, he received them with much civility, but notwithstanding some concern, because most of those visits drew on discourse of worldly things. "They come hither, said he, to talk of philosophy; of which I have no need." And another time his expression was,

"A christian should talk little."

10. A lady of great piety coming to visit him said, "Sir, I would with all my heart lay down my life to save yours." He replied with a cheerful look, and eyes lifted up to heaven, "To die is not to be lost. Our conversation and union will hereafter be more near and intimate." She said, "But, Sir, if it pleased God to restore your health, and continue you longer with us; do not you desire it? *St. Martin* desired to live upon these terms."

He

He answered, "O Madam, there is no comparison between a saint and a sinner! The will of God be done."

11. The third day of his sickness he desired his director might be sent for. And being asked, If he found himself worse? he answered, "No; but in a business of this consequence, it is not safe to delay, for fear of a surprizal, the judgment and memory being both so subject to decay." The next day he made his confession, the day after he confessed again, and almost every day till his death.

12. The pastor of his parish having administered to him the holy communion, and observing his deep silence, not speaking one word, but only with profound humility, "My God, my God, pardon me; I am a great sinner." He asked him the reason why he spake so little, and did not apply himself to those who were well-pleased to hear him? "It is not fitting, said he, to speak in the presence of him whom I have received, nor to take up any room in those hearts which ought to be filled only with God." He added, "My spirit is now applied to that joy, which a creature ought to have, to see himself upon the point of being re-united to his first principle, and his Last End."

13. The same day after dinner, one told him, "It was fit to use some diversion from his serious thoughts: the physicians judging his disease to have much of melancholy in it." To whom he replied, "I never had any joy comparable to that I have felt this day." He asked him, For what cause? "To think, said he, that I am going to be united with my God." He added earnestly, "I desire to be dissolved,
and

and to be with Christ. The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come. And he that thirsteth, Let him come. Behold I come quickly. Amen: Come Lord Jesus!"

14. About noon, he desired his window might be set open, that he might behold the brightness of the day: which being done, he cried out, "O bright day of eternity! How this sun-shine cheers me! helping me to meditate on that day, which shall never have night!"

15. The more his sickness increased, the more he strove to unite himself to God by prayer, imitating his Master, who in the strength of his agony, prayed the more earnestly. And when the violence of his disease so oppressed him, that he had need of greater straining, to keep his mind fixed upon God, he cried out,

"Courage, Courage! Eternity is at hand!"

16. Many such speeches he uttered with incredible fervour, though he could not pronounce them distinctly, by reason of the extreme dryness of his throat, occasioned by the fever. Till at last, stopping his speech, he fixed his eyes stedfastly on heaven, for a quarter of an hour together, with a smiling look, and full of reverence, as if he saw some extraordinary sight. After which, gathering all his strength, he sat up in his bed, took off his cap, and holding it in his hand, said (with words half stifled in his throat, as well by the ardour of his spirit, as the weakness of his body)

"I adore you, I adore you."

17. The

17. The Curate having used the service of the church, to which he attended with great devotion, answering to every prayer, asked him, If he would not give a blessing to his children? he answered, "How so, good Sir, shall I presume to give a blessing in your presence? I should be happy to receive one from you." But being urged thereto, and told the church allowed it, he lifted up his hands and eyes to heaven, saying,

"May it please God to bless you, and to preserve you by his grace from the malignity of the world, that you may have no part therein! And above all, my children, may you live in the fear and love of God, and yield due obedience to your mother!"

18. On Saturday, about half an hour past ten in the forenoon, being just recovered out of a violent convulsion, looking attentively on those that were present, he made signs with his hands, head, and eyes, with a pleasant countenance, for an intimate friend to come near him. Which being done, he said,

"Sir, I have one word to say to you before I die: (then pausing a little to recover his strength, he testified his affection to him, but in words that could not distinctly be understood. At length raising his voice, and speaking more articulately, he went on) "The perfection of a christian life, is to be united to God by faith. Let us not entangle ourselves in novelties. Let us adore his conduct over us, and continue faithful to him unto the end. Let us adhere to that one God, crucified for our salvation. Let us unite all our actions, and all that is in us to his merits; hoping that if we
continue

continue faithful to him, by his grace we shall be partakers of the glory of his Father. I hope we shall there see one another one day, which shall never have an end."

19. Some time after, fixing his eyes upon heaven he said, "The holy Jesus, where is He?" They brought him his picture, which he affectionately kissed. Then turning himself he presently entered into his last agony; which held about a quarter of an hour, the greatest part of which he spent in pronouncing the name of Jesus; making as well as he could, acts of resignation, and commending his spirit to God. After which he expired sweetly, and his holy soul departed to its place of rest.

20. Thus lived and died Mr. *de Renty*, one of the most glorious lights God hath bestowed upon his church in our age. He died at *Paris*, in the 37th year of his age, the 24th of April 1649, about noon. We have great reason to admire the secret councils of God, in taking out of the world, in the flower of his age, a man so qualified to advance the honour of God, and the good of his neighbour. But when we say, it was the hand of God, all things are therein concluded. Hereby he is pleased to let us know, that he hath no need of us for the advancing his glory; and that when he does use us as instruments therein, we ought to behave with all humility in his presence. He hath translated him to another place, where he glorifies his Majesty with greater perfection; and where he waits for us to glorify and love, together with him, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, to all eternity! *Amen!*

F I N I S.